

METTA WORLD PEACE ENCOURAGES STUDENTS TO SEEK HELP AT WASHINGTON PREP

By Kimberli Washington, Public Information Office



Los Angeles Lakers star Metta World Peace, along with Los Angeles County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, stopped by Washington Preparatory High School in Los Angeles to discuss mental health awareness and the importance of seeking help on Thursday, April 4, 2013. Hundreds of students gathered in the school's auditorium during first period to get a glimpse of the basketball star, and hear his encouraging and relatable message that "It doesn't make you weak to help yourself."



Other speakers on the panel included: LACDMH Director Marvin J. Southard, D.S.W., LAUSD Director of School Mental Health Professionals Pia V. Escudero, L.C.S.W., and Washington Preparatory High School Principal Todd Ullah, Ed. D. The event took place on the opening day of the school's new Wellness Center on

campus. The center will provide free or low-cost medical, dental and mental health services to students and residents in the surrounding community.



Metta World Peace spoke to the students about his personal battle with mental illness and in his family. He told of how he sought help and had someone in his life to help him find his way. Metta encouraged students to take advantage of the help around them and to talk to someone they trust when they have a problem. "When you address issues sooner than later, you are able to get over them faster," he said.



The event also took place on another significant day, the 45th anniversary of the assassination of civil rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Metta concluded the assembly with questions from students and he posed the question to the audience: Who knows the greatest leaders of all time? Open to whom ever could

name 10 people, family members could be included. He wanted the students to know the importance of knowing what a leader is and how they affect the lives they lead.